



FINAL REPORT

April 8, 2006

Regional Fire Prevention Education Team

Prepared for:

**Witchita Mountains Wildlife Refuge
Indiahoma, Oklahoma**



ABSTRACT

In March 2006 the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge ordered a Regional Fire Prevention Education Team (FPET) to develop an outreach program to reduce the risk of wildland fire to 43 communities in the vicinity of the 15 refuges in Oklahoma and Northern Texas. The team was in place from March 4 through April 8. A Delegation of Authority was signed on March 6, 2006. The FPET was established as a product development team. At the completion of the assignment six publications were submitted for GPO printing, Power Point presentations were produced, and an implementation strategy was developed. The roll out of the materials, displays, and presentations will begin upon receipt of the publications from printing. Community meetings, events, and training sessions will be utilized to deliver the messages of the outreach program. Additionally a web site was developed to present information about prescribed fire, Firewise, and wildfire. The web site is hosted by the agency server.

Acknowledgements

The Team acknowledges the following individuals and organizations for their significant contribution to the assignment:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Ralph Bryant | WMWR | Acting Refuge Manager |
| Kelly Munsterman | WMWR | Refuge Fire Program Officer |
| Chip Kimball | WMWR | Refuge IT/Web Master |
| Rob Wood | WMWR | Assistant Fire Management Officer |
| Art Needleman | R2 | Visitor Services |
| Larry Bell | R2 | External Affairs |
| Carol and Dennis Stayer | Meers VFD | |

The entire staff of the WMWR was a pleasure to work with. Their patience, understanding, and assistance with our stay was overwhelming.

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1. Introduction

Background:

Wildfire danger and fire occurrence in Oklahoma have been above normal since December 2005. Numerous fires have occurred on the fifteen National Wildlife Refuges located in Oklahoma and Northern Texas. Communities in the vicinity of the refuges have also been threatened by an active fire season. The Fire Management Officer (FMO) of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge near Indianola, Oklahoma obtained severity funds to order a regional Fire Prevention Education Team (FPET) to assist the refuge system with developing and implementing a prevention and outreach program concerning wildland fire safety and prescribed fire. The Firewise program was the central fire safety message. On March 4, 2006 a Prevention Team Leader (PETL) was dispatched to assess the situation and develop a strategy to assist the host agency. A team was developed over the next few days consisting of an Information Officer (IOF/PIO) and a Prevention Team Member (PETM). In addition, one full-time and two part-time employees of the refuge were assigned to the team. Team composition focused on personnel with product development and informational skills to deliver the desired products. On March 25, 2006 a new team leader transitioned on to the team. The team continued through March 31 with a stable team. Transition was nearly seamless due to complete documentation left by the team leader and the assistance of team members. No significant tasks were added or changed for the duration of the assignment. The primary focus of the transitioned team was to take the assignments to completion. Demobilization of the team was on April 8, 2006. The team based out of the headquarters of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The facility, liaison, and support staff were excellent and critical to team task completion. The Delegation of Authority tasked the FPET to develop literature, Firewise presentations, and methodology to implement a comprehensive outreach program to aid in the protection of the refuges and 43 surrounding communities. Development of a web page, tied to the existing WMR site, was also tasked to the team. This report details the activities, accomplishments, and documentation for the assignment.



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Regional Wildland Fire Prevention & Education Team I Communication Plan

Executive Summary

Ongoing wildfires and extreme to critical wildfire danger have been occurring since December 2005 around the USF&WS (FWS) National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) located in Oklahoma and Northern Texas. In response to this high wildfire incidence and risk, the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Fire Management Officer (FMO) obtained severity funds and requested the services of a Regional Wildland Fire Prevention Education Team (FPET). A Prevention Team Leader (PETL) was dispatched to Indianola, OK on March 4, 2006 to conduct FPET pre-planning. An Information Officer (IOF/PIO) and Prevention Team Member (PETM) were ordered two days later. The Team is also comprised of one full-time and two part-time PETM trainees – all trainees are normally assigned to the Refuge. The FPET is presently working to develop a Firewise (i.e., wildfire survivability and education) message for 43 communities adjoining the 15 FWS Refuges found in Oklahoma and Northern Texas. Specifically, the Product-Development Prevention Team has been charged to: (a) Create a comprehensive Firewise power point presentation that delivers a good fire-bad fire message and ways to survive the latter; (b) Create complementing Firewise and fire-related literature; (c) Develop a work plan to implement delivery of the Firewise presentation and literature products; and (d) Educate and train Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge staff on Firewise delivery and FPET skill sets to support Refuge staff's participation in the roll-out of the Firewise products. The FPET #1 will be operational through March 26, 2006. A decision to either cease team operations or transition to a second FPET for product delivery will come from Refuge management. This decision will be based on the threat of wildland fire in these communities and continued availability of federal severity funding. The availability of severity funds is central to keeping an FPET presence at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Regardless, FPET product development and the Team's documentation will serve to support future NWR's management decisions on community fire prevention and education program delivery long after the FPET(s) has demobilized.

Purpose

Benchmark and advance Firewise program awareness and knowledge in communities located proximate to OK/North TX NWRs. Develop Firewise products and delivery pathways that are diverse enough to reach the targeted audiences such that a measurable reduction of property damage (structure losses) is realized.

Objectives

- Establish, benchmark, and increase community awareness of the National Firewise Program with regional specific fire information and education products.
 - Administer survey to determine customer's media outlet preferences and basic Firewise knowledge.
 - Create a concise and timeless Firewise power point presentation (P³) to be used for community presentations.
 - Create Firewise, Prescribed Fire, and Wildfire-related publications.
- Reduce communities' property damage and structure loss due to wildfire.
- Educate customer on NWRs' use of Prescribed Fire as an important wildlife management tool that also provides secondary hazardous fuel reduction benefits.
- Create and implement a web-based generic fire information link for all OK/North TX NWRs to further diversify information delivery pathways used by the Refuges.
- Diversify the OK/North TX NWRs' outreach with the 'Fire Information' toolbox of resources identified above.

Key Messages/Talking Points

- Arson and debris burning are the primary causes of wildfires in OK and North TX.
- Check your county burn ban status and rules before conducting outdoor burning.
- Wildfires cause economic loss and other hardships to homeowners and communities.
- Defensible space around homes and outbuildings is important – visit www.Firewise.org for tips on improving structure survivability.
- Fast-moving grassfires leave little time to protect your family and property. Pre-plan by creating defensible space around structures. Establish fire evacuation routes and fuel-free safety zones to survive during a wildfire event.
- Don't think that you will be present when a wildfire approaches your property – chances are you will not be at home when the fire occurs.
- Learn more about Firewise today – request a Firewise presentation at your next community event. Contact your local volunteer fire department (VFD) or the nearest NWR for more information.
- Go on-line and visit your local NWR web site to learn more about living with fire.

The Role of the Fire Prevention Education Team

The FPET supports broad or regional wildland fire prevention and educational needs preceeding and during periods of high wildland fire danger or prescribed fire activity. The Team serves to reinforce local fire prevention and education resources and to bring special prevention and education planning, logistics, and operations expertise to bear in larger, complex severity situations that tax or exceed the capabilities of local prevention organizations. The Team's role in fire prevention and education is similar to the roles of Type I and Type II Incident Management Teams in large and complex incident management situations. For the current assignment, the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge FPET is developing fire-related products that will reach out to a large customer base living on lands surrounding the 15 NWRs located in Oklahoma and Northern Texas.

Target Audiences

- Residents, homeowners, and landowners living and working adjacent to the 15 NWRs;
- Visitors and tourists visiting the 15 NWRs and surrounding communities;
- Media: television, daily/weekly newspapers, radio, and community newsletters [Note: Media is typically viewed as a primary conduit to 'deliver the message or create an interested audience'; however, media support will not be needed for this assignment until the NWRs' fire-related products are ready for distribution.]

Action Items

Define Customers Information Resources and Benchmark Level of Firewise Knowledge

- Administer a ten-question survey at local community event(s)/gathering places and at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center, the latter administered only to visiting OK residents.
- Use survey results to prioritize communication avenues to customers, baseline the customer level of Firewise knowledge, and to justify establishing internet-based fire information links on the 15 NWRs' web pages.
- Administer the customer survey before and after Firewise program delivery to measure outreach results.

Develop a 'Firewise' Presentation for use at the Community Level –

- Develop 20-25 minute P³ to deliver to the target audience on Firewise and fire-related topics. Knowledgeable fire staff (Refuge or FPET) will formally present the final P³ product (VFD resources may also be trained for presentation delivery). The P³ will contain the following 'timeless'(i.e., we are purposefully avoiding use of time –sensitive power point slides) components:
 - Introduction – Fire Is Essential To The Health of Grassland Ecosystems
 - OK Fuels – Weather Conditions – Fire Behavior
 - FWS Prescribed Fires As A Primary Management Tool
 - Wildfires Do Not Occur In Controlled Conditions - Recent Wildfire Pictures

- Causes Of Wildfire – Arson & Carelessness (verbalize current wildfire statistics)
 - ‘Wildfire Burns More Than Grass’ (‘heart-string’ messaging included)
 - Firewise ‘Core’ Message -- Primary Defensible Space & Survivability Measures(good/bad)
 - Additional Resources:
 - Newly-established USF&WS Refuge fire information products including a diversity of publications and fire web sites
 - Oklahoma Wildfire Prevention Coalition publications
 - Oklahoma Forestry Services and Texas Forest Service fire-related publications and web links
 - Summary & Closure – Why Is Firewise Important To Target Audience?
- This presentation will also have supporting Talking Points that match up with each P³ slide presented to the audience. The Talking Points will serve to proctor the presenter and ensure all key messages are delivered as intended. The Talking Points will be particularly important for ‘first-time’ presenters that have no previous exposure to the P³, such as participating VFDs.
 - Develop a second ‘silent’ P³ of about 50-100 slides that will continuously loop on the tabletop monitor. This presentation should consist of eye-catching images and Firewise messages that serve to draw attendees to the fire publication and information table to learn more about available literature and web-based resources. Alternatively, a video could be displayed at the information table. The Team recommends that Refuge staff use *OSU’s Eastern Redcedar: Invasion Of The Creeping Menace*; this 22-minute DVD video depicts this cedar tree species as an invasive species to the prairie grasslands ecosystem that creates an even more dangerous fuel load to the Oklahoma landscape. Another useable ~15 minute DVD video is the product recently produced by another OK FPET (Paul Waudell’s Team) that recently served to develop fire-prevention publications for the Oklahoma Wildfire Prevention Coalition. Finally, Jack Cohen’s 20-minute *Wildfire: Preventing Home Ignitions* would be a good choice to demonstrate how wildfires can ignite structures and ways to minimize the risk of structure ignition. The FPET recommends that staff maintain this product display table throughout the meeting event to ensure expensive equipment is not inadvertently damaged or removed from the display.

Develop Fire-Related Publications That Complement the ‘Firewise’ Presentation –

- A number of publications recently developed and distributed by the Oklahoma Wildfire Prevention Coalition are being incorporated in the Refuges’ Firewise and fire prevention message. Additionally, the Texas Forest Service (TFS) has published a diversity of wildfire and Firewise publications that are available for distribution or on-line viewing. The TFS Fire Prevention staff is also an excellent resource for Texas residents. Unfortunately, Oklahoma Forestry Services does not have similar Prevention staff resources available to serve its customers. Due to this paucity of Oklahoma fire information and staff, the WMWR has resourced a

regional FPET to develop fire information for neighboring communities. In developing this information, the FPET is tapping into the internet to secure fire publications previously developed by other federal, state, and local agencies along with former FPET publications that cover these topics.

The team is currently developing the following publications:

- ‘Individual Homeowner Assessment’ (hi-gloss, double-sided flyer)
- ‘Firewise Actions’ (lowest to highest cost); (hi-gloss, double-sided flyer)
- ‘Firewise Landscape Checklist’; (hi-gloss, double-sided flyer)
- ‘Firewise Vegetation’ (Specific to OK/TX - multiple page document)
- ‘Burning in Cross Timbers’ (hi-gloss, double-sided flyer)
- ‘Burning in Grasslands’ (hi-gloss, double-sided flyer)
- ‘Preparing a House for Wildfire’ & ‘Wildfire Approaching Checklist’ as a hi-gloss, double-sided document (previously developed by USF&WS)

The team will incorporate existing publications as follows:

- ‘Are you Firewise Oklahoma?’ (Quarterfold Brochure)
- ‘Wildland Arson Burns More Than Trees’ (Poster)*
- ‘Living With Fire – A Guide For The Great Plains Homeowner’ (Newspaper)
- ‘Outdoor Burning Ban’ (Rack Card)*
- ‘Be Firewise’ (Rack Card)*
- ‘Oklahoma Fire Danger’ (Rack Card)*
- ‘Caused By Carelessness – Prevent Wildfires’ (Small Poster)*
- ‘Be Firewise – Not In My Backyard’ (Small Poster)*

*Previously developed by the Oklahoma Wildfire Prevention Coalition FPET

The FPET will recommend a first printing of the team-developed publications once costs per document estimates have been obtained from the GPO. Ultimately, WMWR staff will make the print decision on a given publication and the number to print and distribute.

Develop Process to Deliver ‘Firewise’ Presentation & Fire Publications to Communities

Refuge fire staff want to deliver the Firewise message and publications to the targeted communities directly with either Refuge personnel or FPET involvement (the latter provided severity funds remain available). The Team recommends the following actions be taken to effectively deliver the fire message:

- A display table of fire information should accompany all presentations. The display table should consist of :
 - a tri-fold, table-top display board with a summary of key messages presented pictorially with a few key bulleted messages
 - a selection of literature that covers prescribed fire, wildland fire, and Firewise publications that complement the P³
 - a ‘silent’ P³ of fire-related pictures that act to draw attendees to the display table and get them interested in the publication handouts.

This P³ would appear on a large screen flat panel LCD monitor with a height adjustable stand. The monitor would be cable-connected to a laptop computer located behind the display for safety and security reasons

- The supporting table should be large enough to support the tri-fold display board, PC equipment, and publications. Also plan to carry two folding chairs to use at all presentation events
- The equipment supporting these community Firewise presentations should consist of the following:
 - One display table (table cover/skirting optional)
 - One table-top tri-fold display board with foam-backed 'Firewise', 'Prescribed Fire' and 'Wildland Fire' pictures and messages on each of the three panels
 - Three small, clip-on flood lights to fasten at the top of the display board
 - One 20" flat panel LCD monitor
 - Two Laptop PCs that have a DVD player and cables
 - One set of high quality PC speakers
 - One LCD projector with all cables/remote control with laser pointer
 - Two 50' extension cord
 - Two surge protection power strips
 - Assorted fire publications to meet needs of audience
 - Some Smokey Bear freebies to facilitate customers to browse the fire publications table

The WMWR FMO has noted his intent to deliver the Firewise presentations as a 'roving tour' based from the WMWR as opposed to purchasing equipment for several of the 15 Refuges. As such, the team recommends that WMWR purchase two complete sets of the equipment listed above to allow simultaneous presentations to occur (as they will sometimes be scheduled). Additionally, if a piece of equipment fails, there will be a backup. We also believe assists can be rendered from other refuge staff (and refuge volunteers) when the presentation is delivered to their respective customers.

Delivery of this outreach education module should occur when the target audience is most 'reachable'- that is to say, when the target communities are most willing to hear the message and positively react to it. The Team recommends that either staff or a future FPET members present this education module preceding OK's traditional wildfire seasons as well as also during extended occurrences of wildfire incidents. The bottom line is that when wildfire is in the news, the news media and their viewing audiences are ready to hear the message. Therefore, this is an ideal time to deliver Firewise and other fire-related subjects to the targeted audiences. If a future FPET is used for product implementation, the following actions are recommended for team-delivery of the Firewise products:

- Announce the FPET presence – create a press release on team’s presence to all media markets located in targeted communities (Note: This ‘Development Team’ is creating press releases to address this recommendation – OK & TX Media Resource Guides are available).
- Identify community outreach opportunities, including yearly and seasonal venues and special events (e.g., festivals, county fairs, and other attractions).
- Provide contact telephone numbers and e-mail addresses to reach the team and/or team office.
- Document contacts, event opportunities, and population of a given media outlet’s population served.
- Schedule Firewise presentations and coordinate with refuge staff
- Record number of presentations, audience size, and number of additional event invitations that result from Team presence and visibility; also track fire publication type and numbers distributed at meetings.
- Create event and venue lists for future fire prevention networking.
- Continue presentation process until all 43 communities have had a least one presentation.
- Keep detailed log of contacts, opportunities, and end-results.
- Re-administer the Firewise survey to determine value-added impact of Firewise program presentations.

Alternatively, the Refuge staff can complete the above actions; however, normal workload requirements may lead to a less-than-effective implementation due to basic time constraints. Thus, there is value to bringing in additional FPETs to conduct and complete the first round of Program implementation.

The WMWR fire staff has suggested that VFDs could also present the Firewise P³ and distribute supporting literature. Approaching this presenter resource pool in a train-the-trainer capacity would be valued from a time and personnel resource management perspective; however, some additional training would be appropriate to ensure the VFD ‘presenters’ applied the developed metric tools to ensure measurable results of this outreach are documented. The equipment necessary to present the Firewise program would need to be provided by the VFD.

Develop and Implement Web-Based Fire Products on All 15 Refuge Web Sites –

Presently, the majority of the 15 NWRs located in OK and Northern TX do not have a fire information web link for their customers. There is a national FWS fire web site but the information provided on this web site is limited in content and a broad-brush of the NWR system – there is little specific fire information available for the OK/Northern TX FWS Refuges. As recently as several months ago, the WMWR’s FMO targeted fixing this information void by resourcing WMWR’s web master to accomplish this task. The FPET is planning to change this information gap by designing a web shell that will contain (1) Prescribed Fire as a management tool (specific to OK/Northern TX NWRs), (2) Firewise, and (3) Wildfire information and product links. Each link will consist of an introduction to the specific topic and a

topic overview complemented with relevant photos, illustrations, and captions. The FPET-developed, management-approved publications will also be embedded into these links along with a list of additional on-line resources for further reading and information. Some of the web-based publications will be interactive; however, all documents will be made available as a pdf download. The FPET will work closely with the WMWR web master to complete this task. The Team further recommends that hidden counters be placed on the three major sublinks of the Fire main menu page to capture some basic metrics on viewer visitation – the FPET web master will incorporate counters to record some sublink information. On the long-term, the Refuge may want to invest in some web-based statistics (e.g., Web Trends ©) to better track customer visitation, subject interests, and document downloads on the 15 refuges' web sites. Finally, the new web site will be 508c compliant with ADA regulations.

Key Contacts

- Media outlets (TV, Newspapers, Radio, Publications);
- Local 1st responder agencies (OKFS, TFS, Local VFD's, County Fire Chief Associations, and Emergency Management, County Fire Marshals);
- Civic Groups;
- Chambers of Commerce;
- Public officials.

Partners

The primary partners for the Regional Fire Prevention Education Team are the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, fourteen other Refuges, and one National Fish Hatchery located across Oklahoma and Northern Texas. The team receives logistical support and day-to-day guidance and liaison support from the WMWR's FMO. In addition, there are many local VFDs that have the potential for partnering with the refuges and FPET to deliver the Firewise P³ and publications provided by the refuge, if they have their own PCs and projection equipment.

Evaluation (Metrics)

The primary metric will be the continued monitoring of number of structures lost to wildfire in OK. Other metrics include:

- Number of presentations made by FPET/refuge staff/VFDs
 - Number of presentation attendees
 - Before and after 'Firewise Knowledge' survey results
 - Number of news articles related to product availability/release documented in print.*
- *Obtain from media or estimate customer viewing-listening-reading population base to the practicable.

3. Objectives and Accomplishments

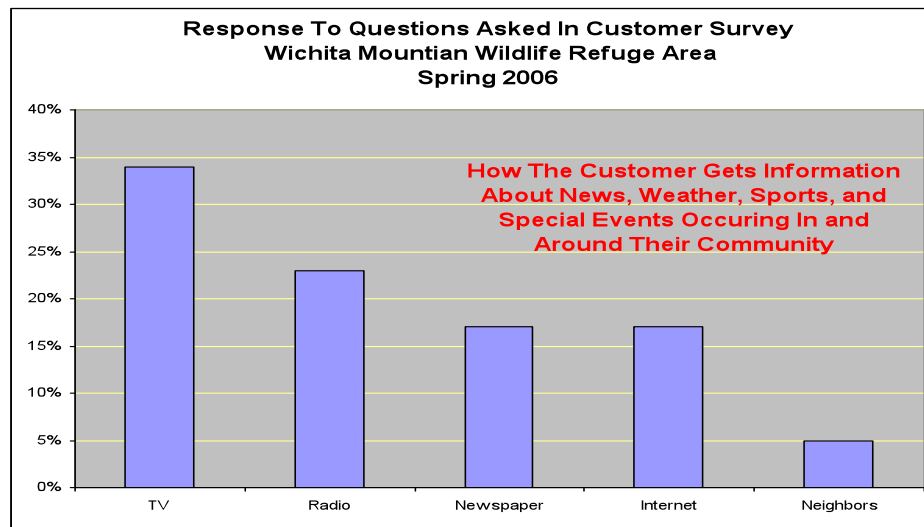
The goal of the Team was to establish, benchmark, and increase community awareness of the National Firewise Program with regional specific fire information and educational products. To attain this goal, the following objectives were established and attained.

Objective: Administer surveys to determine customer's media outlet preferences and basic Firewise knowledge.

Accomplishments: Four separate surveys were conducted. Oklahoma residents were surveyed at the WMWR Visitor Center. Surveys were completed over a four week time span. A sampling of residents at Medicine Park targeted a specific community. Between these two survey sets, both a broad and narrow area of population was sampled. Two additional surveys focused on customers that were more farm or ranch oriented. They were conducted at Sutherlands and Atwoods in Lawton, OK. Both stores have a farm product orientation. The numbers of surveys from the four sites are summarized below.

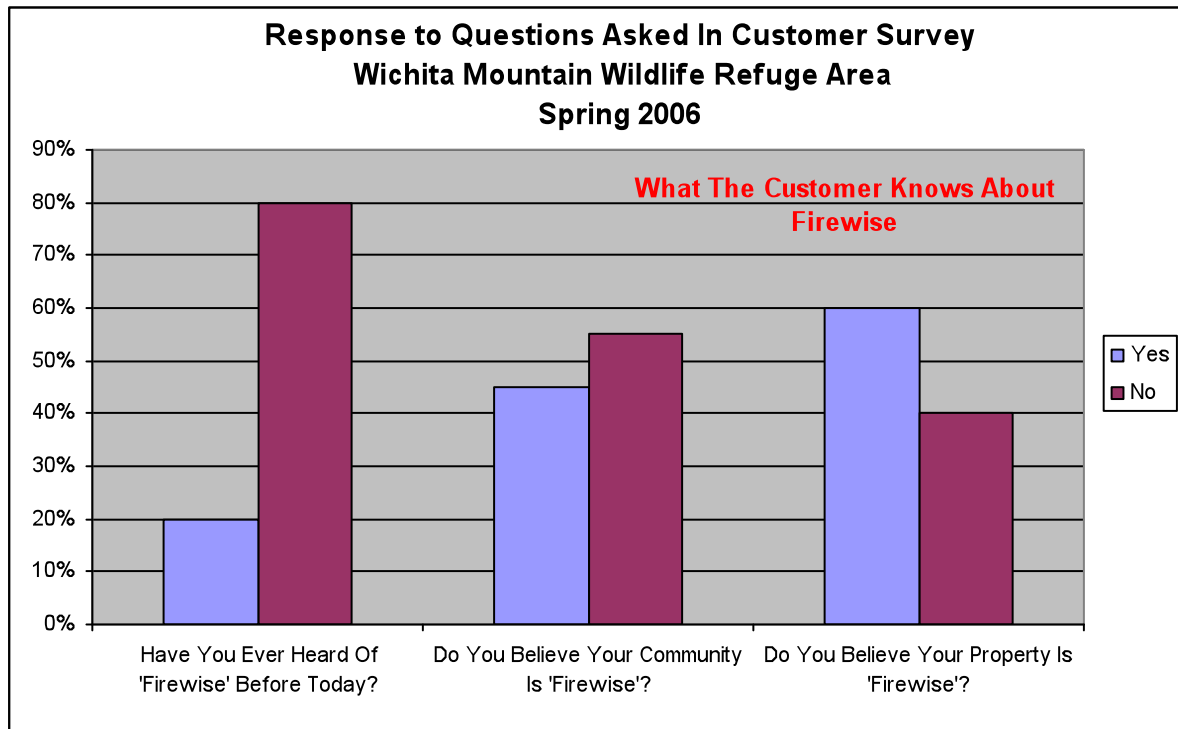
| Survey Sites | Number of Surveys |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Visitor's Center | 100 |
| Medicine Park | 25 |
| Sutherland's | 50 |
| Atwood's | 24 |
| Total Surveys | 199 |

The survey form, "Communication Sources & Firewise Customer Survey" was implemented on March 11, 2006. A copy of the form is in the appendix. Questions were designed to find out two basic answers: How do you get your news, weather, sports, and special events information occurring in and around your community? and What is your level of Firewise knowledge?



The responses showed that television (34%) and radio (23%) were the two highest information source. Internet use tied with newspapers at 17%.

Responses to the Firewise awareness questions were interesting. Only 20% of the respondents had ever heard of Firewise. When asked about whether their community and home were Firewise, the responses were more positive, 45% and 60% respectively. It is possible that if they did not know what Firewise was, their understanding of whether their home was safe would be skewed. More probable is that even if they did not know about Firewise, they responded in the sense that they felt their home was safe from wildfire.



The above data is, essentially, from the Lawton area of Oklahoma. Data from the Visitor Center compiled surveys from Oklahoma residents, but they were not all from the local area. The data from the Visitor Center and the combined data were essentially the same. Therefore, the above data will be used as the baselines for future survey collection to serve as a benchmark for comparison.

It is the intent of the FPET that two survey sets of data be collected during and after the roll out of the implementation strategy. The first survey will be taken among participants at community meetings. The survey intent is to judge an individual's Firewise knowledge before and after the presentation. A second survey will take place after implementation in a similar manner to the initial samplings. The results will measure the general public's Firewise knowledge. This second data set should give an indication if the overall message was delivered effectively.

Surveys will be taken in July after a concerted effort has been made to saturate the media with Firewise information and community outreach meetings. Project success can be measured in the relative change in Firewise knowledge.

Objective: Create a concise and timeless Firewise power point presentation (P3) to be used for community presentations.

Accomplishments: A power point presentation, approximately one-half hour in length, was completed and ready for use in community presentations. The design follows the guidelines imposed by the host agency. Talking Point notes accompany each slide to assist the presenter with delivery. The intended use is for a presenter to deliver the presentation at trainings, community meetings, or other type forum in which a captive audience can be addressed. Individuals on the WMWR were trained to use the presentation and are prepared to train others both in and out of the refuge system. The presentation is electronically contained on the accompanying Final Report CD.

Objective: Develop a “stand alone” power point presentation to be used in a display setting in conjunction with display boards and materials.

Accomplishments: A power point presentation was developed, cycling every four minutes. Five different topics are presented with about four slides to each topic. A Firewise video is inserted into the presentation that demonstrates Firewise principles. A copy of the presentation is on the Final Report CD. The presentation is displayed on a monitor to the side of a colorful display board. The intent of the slide show is to help draw attention to the display and to convey at least one message to any person taking 15 to 30 seconds at the presentation.

Objective: Develop a table top display to be used in community meetings and selected events that conveys the messages of Firewise, Prescribed Fire and Wildfire.

Accomplishments:

The display board covers three topics. The center is the Firewise message. To each side are the messages of Prescribed Fire and Wildfire. The photos are to draw people to the display to pick up materials and, hopefully, leave with at least one message. For those individuals that spend more time at the display, there is a wealth of knowledge and interest contained in the brochures and picture displays. The tabletop includes the three panel display, the monitor for the revolving power point presentation, brochures and publications, and fire tools as props to draw attention.



Display (not final) at the Meers Community Meeting

The presenters at the display are crucial to the success of the exhibit. Their job is to greet attendees, be observant of their interests, and engage them in conversation. Some people will show an elevated interest, for example, in Firewise. Capturing the moment, the name and contact information should be gathered for follow-up discussions.

A file containing the text headers, pictures, and descriptive information for the display was left with the host agency. The information will be taken to a local printer for professional matting to produce two sets of quality product for the displays.

Objective: Do Beta testing to assess the effectiveness of the presentation and make necessary adjustments and revisions for the final version.

Accomplishments: A test run of the community meeting outreach presentation was made at the Meers Community Center on April 4. The concept of the test was to provide an exposure to the same visual presentation that will be given during the roll out phase in July. The table top display was near the entrance with the stand-alone power point presentation, photo displays, fire tools and brochures. The half-hour presentation was then given. There were nine area residents, most of them fire department members, who listened to the program and were then asked for input into what messages they got from the program and improvements they would suggest in the process. The overall response was very positive. Suggestions were made to emphasize certain topics, such as damages and legal aspects of burning.

An after action review of the comments was conducted by the Team. All comments were considered. Most of the concerns could be handled in the presenter's comments without significant change to the slide programs or display area. A report on the Meers meeting is included in documentation file.



A participant at the Meers Community Meeting looks at display materials.

Two other tests occurred during the assignment to assess the presentations. On March 23 a group of WMWR employees reviewed the stand up presentation given by the Team Leader. Comments led to minor changes in the structure of the package. Key messages were conveyed successfully.

Another test was made using the stand alone presentation to a group of students from Mid Western State University of Wichita Falls, TX. The test was done at the Education Center at the WMWR. The students were in an "English as a second language" class. The language barrier posed some difficulty, but an important message was learned by the team. The messages of Firewise were simple to understand. Since no one had ever heard of Firewise, some explanation was needed to convey the messages. However, within a half hour, the ideas the students were expressing to become more Firewise made it obvious that the messages were received. From the test, a recommendation developed to work with Education Center staff to get Firewise information included in their programs. With their education skills and their exposure to over 20,000 visitors, the message of Firewise can be spread to a broad spectrum of the public. A copy of the test report is in the documentation file.

Objective: Create Firewise, Prescribed Fire, and Wildfire-related publications.

Accomplishments: Six publications were created, approved at the regional level, and have been submitted to GPO for printing. Three documents deal with Firewise. The titles of the publications are:

‘Firewise Actions In Dollars and Sense’

‘How to Have a Firewise Home – A Homeowners Assessment Sheet’

‘Firewise Landscaping Checklist – Tips for Landowners and Landscapers’

A third document deals with the same subject from a different approach. The two-sided document covers the topics of ‘Wildfire Approaching Checklist’ and ‘Preparing a House for Wildland Fire Season’. Firewise tips are given through a sense of home and personal safety.

The subject of prescribed fire was addressed in two excellent publications that cover why fire is beneficial to the management of grasslands and forests if done in a professional and planned manner. The two documents are:

‘Burning in Grasslands’

‘Burning in Hardwoods’

A seventh publication was drafted concerning a list of fire resistant plant materials. Due to formatting issues and other considerations, the document will not be published at this time. The six documents will be part of the WMWR web page. The fire page will provide downloadable versions of the documents to help get key information to the public. Copies of the documents are in the appendix or on the Final Report CD.

Objective: Create a web site linked to the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge site. The site should convey information about Prescribed Fire, Wildfire, and the Firewise program.

Accomplishments: A web site has been completed that will integrate with WMWR standards. Subject matter on all three topics was written, approved and inserted into the site. On the following page is **the introduction page only**. Each of the six publication documents will also be accessible. All of the 15 refuges in the Oklahoma and North Texas area will be able to share information and place important works on the site. The site will become more useful as refuge managers contribute to the documentation and information available on the site. As customers become familiar with the site location and value of the information, consumer demand will help dictate the continued quality needed for effective communication.

Useful links are tied to the web page for added value in site use. The success of the site will depend on a wide variety of networks that find the site useful. Knowledge of refuge staff is an invaluable asset in the study of managing grasslands, hardwoods, cross-timbers areas, and other lands of the area. Their experience in the use of prescribed fire is another valuable topic of interest.

Potential users of the web site will be the surrounding communities that are learning about the Firewise program and how they can manage living with fire. The overall outreach

program will connect each refuge to a large segment of its customer base. Firewise site information is useful and informative. Perhaps one of the biggest assets of the web site will be **keeping the connection** between the communities and the refuge. From that connectivity, many other subjects can be conveyed.

As of the close of this report, the web site was reviewed and approved at the local level. The site will be uploaded next week. A request has been made to add a hot link to the USFWL web site to go directly to the fire page. A number of very useful links are included on the site including weather, national fire sites and Firewise. The following page is the opening page of the web site.



[USFWS Home](#) | [FWS Fire Management](#) | [NIFC](#) | [Oklahoma Forestry](#) | [Texas Forest Service](#) |

[Home](#)

[Prescribed Fire](#)

[Firewise](#)

[Wildland Fire](#)

[Downloads](#)

Fire Prevention Links

[Firewise.org](#)

[Smokey Bear](#)

[FEMA \(USFA\)](#)

Fire Management Links

[USFWS Fire](#)

[Management](#)

[NIFC](#)

[USFS Fire & Aviation](#)

[National Wildfire](#)

[Coord. Group](#)

[Geographical Coord](#)

[Centers](#)

[Fire Glossary](#)

Fire Weather

[Oklahoma Mesonet](#)

[NWS Fire Weather](#)

[NWS Southern](#)

[Region Headquarters](#)

[home /](#)

Fire



Although fire is inherently neither good nor bad, the circumstances surrounding its ignition, its burn rate, its location and its intensity are significant. Wildlands are areas of land where the vegetation can grow and natural forces take place without significant interference. Areas of agriculture, urban areas and industrial development, are not considered wildland. As homes are

being built further into the wildland interface, risk of personal and property damage has increased. Fire requires three essential elements: heat, fuel and oxygen. Wildland fires can occur in any flammable vegetation. Those fuels, along with weather and topography affect the behavior of wildland fires. Beneficial or damaging effects of wildland fire depend on circumstances surrounding the fire.

Wildfires

Wildfires are unplanned, unwanted fires that burn uncontrollably. They destroy natural resources, property and lives. People (98%), not lightning (2%), ignite most wildfires in our area. Most human ignitions are unintentional. Carelessness with debris burning, campfires, welding and other human activity is the most common cause of wildfires. Fires such as these can most easily be prevented.



Prescribed fires

Prescribed fires are planned to meet specific management objectives. Professionals regularly use prescribed fire as a management tool on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges in the Oklahoma and North Texas Fire Management Districts. Prescribed fires are carefully managed and applied only under predetermined conditions to ensure the desired results are achieved. Habitat manipulation can be attained by varying fire timing, frequency, and intensity. The proper use of prescribed fire reduces fuel that can cause damaging fire and maintains the ecosystem in a diverse, healthy and vigorous state.

Objective: Develop an implementation strategy to raise the awareness of Firewise in the 43 identified communities surrounding the 15 refuges in Oklahoma and Northern Texas.

Accomplishments: The strategy to roll out the presentations and information about Firewise to the communities neighboring refuge lands is a critical piece of the Team's goals. Delivery to the public of useful and timely information will help reduce the risks to residents and their property from wildland fire. Information by itself is just information. The roll out has to get people jump started to take the principles of Firewise, convey them to their community, and get an action plan implemented. The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge will spearhead an effort to get the Firewise message into daily conversation through community meetings, media attention and personal contacts. The following document details the suggested strategy to complete this task.

Implementation Strategy for Fire Outreach Project

The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has developed a community outreach program to communicate three important topics to the public. The topics are Prescribed Fire, Firewise, and Wildland Fire. Text documents and visual products have been created to aid in the communication of the messages. Presentations to a variety of target audiences will be made in July of 2006, funds pending.

Prescribed fire is used on National Wildlife Refuge System lands in Oklahoma and Texas. Public understanding of the use of prescribed fire to manage wild lands is important. A distinction of prescribed fire versus wildfire is also essential. People are more familiar with the aspects of damage from wildfire. Much less is known about the benefits and uses of professionally managed prescribed fire.

The Firewise program is a recognized educational program to help communities prepare themselves in the event of a wildfire. The NWR has recognized a need to promote the Firewise program helping communities understand their role in living with fire. The raised community awareness assists the refuges in their attempts to protect the resources and communicate messages of the use of fire in land management.

The following discussion outlines the process, timeline, and potential outcomes from the project. This strategy is a transition from the initial work of a Fire Prevention Education Team deployed (March 4 to April 9, 2006) through the completion of the project in the summer of 2006. Hopefully, this will only be the beginning step in a long-term relationship between the NWR and surrounding communities to deal with fire issues.

STAFFING NEEDS:

Fire Prevention Education Team

Deployment of a Fire Prevention Education Team for roll out is recommended. Arrival of the team would be based on the timing needed for delivery. Public reception of the messages will be higher during dry conditions when fire is on the minds of the public, but before high fire danger is present. The composition and function of the team would be as follow:

Team Leader – Organize the overall implementation including planning, staffing of meetings, quality control, product delivery, media coverage, and metric measurements.

Information Officers (2) – Ensure media coverage of the overall outreach program is achieved prior to roll out. Emphasize the purpose of the project and the benefits to individuals and the communities. Promote the role NWR has played in bringing the Firewise message to the public. Surround the community meeting delivery with media coverage to expand the audience beyond the attendees to the general public. Provide training opportunities to the local and regional media so they can better convey the messages to their audiences.

Prevention Team Member (1) - Facilitate and provide the logistical support to the district refuges and presentation cadre. Coordinate meeting dates, presentation equipment, and materials for the Team.

Presentation Cadre

A cadre of individuals has been developed and trained to perform train-the-trainer sessions for district refuge employees, fire departments, and other individuals who might use the power point presentation to outreach to the communities. At this point Richard Baker, WMWR is the lead on the team. Jennifer Tucker, SCA employee, WMWR will assist throughout her assignment as a presenter. Additional fire staff will assist with the project. It is the intent of the host agency to have NWR employees conduct the majority of the presentations.

PRESENTATIONS, DISPLAYS, AND MATERIALS

Presentations

Two separate power point presentations have been developed. One is a stand-alone show that repeats five topics every four minutes. Each topic is short enough that an average viewer will pick up something in the delivery, or at least have their attention drawn to the exhibit to view other display features or written materials.

The second presentation is a half-hour program given by a live presenter. The program has specific talking points and delivers the messages of prescribed fire and Firewise. The intended use is for community meetings or other captive audiences.

Displays

Two sets of display equipment have been assembled. A set contains a three-panel display board with pictures and descriptive text. A display monitor will show the stand-alone power point presentation run by a computer located in the back of the display. Written materials will be displayed on an 8' table in front of the display board. The display sets will have logistical equipment and supplies to support and run the display.

Brochures and Publications

To help convey the prescribed fire message and how it is effectively used on the refuge lands, two documents have been produced. The documents are "Burning in Hardwoods" and "Burning in Grasslands". The function of the documents is to provide background information, justification, and beneficial effects of fire. An order of 25,000 of each publication has been ordered.

The highest use of these documents is expected to be as informational handouts in refuge offices, visitor centers, and educational facilities. Approximately 1000 copies of each document will be distributed to each of the 15 refuge sites. Additional copies will be purchased for general distribution and specific educational purposes.

To evaluate homeowner risk an "Individual Home Owner Assessment" form is available. The self-test asks basic questions about preparedness. A score is assessed to categorize the level of risk of the property. A list of action items to reduce risk from wildfire is contained in

“Firewise Actions in Dollars and Sense”. A third publication contains useful information with visuals to help make your home more Firewise. The two sided publication titles are “Preparing a House for Wildland Fire Season” and “Wildfire Approaching Checklist”.

A publication to address another aspect of creating a Firewise environment is “Firewise Landscaping Checklist”. The document is to assist the landowner and landscaper in choosing vegetation which is more fire resistant.

Approximately 20,000 copies of each publication are printed and will be distributed to the public in meetings, events and personal contacts. All of the Firewise material is aimed at the landowner. Planners and developers can also benefit from education in Firewise principles. Community and personal action are essential in creating an environment that can withstand the occurrence of a wildfire.

A variety of brochures, posters, and rack cards will be utilized from other development efforts of the Oklahoma Wildfire Prevention Coalition, the Oklahoma Division of Forestry, and the Firewise program.

Web Site

A web page has been created to link from the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge web site that contains further text discussion of prescribed fire issues. In addition to prescribed fire, there is general information about the physical and scientific aspects of wildfire. Distinctions between wildfire and prescribed fire are drawn. A third topic explored on the site is about wildland-urban interface and the Firewise program.

Web site usage will be targeted to the general public, but will also serve as a host for information that can be exchanged among refuges. The site will be advertised through various networks to generate interest and feedback. Broad based usage of the site should be a goal along with the additions of documents, photos, and other useful information. Approximately 30,000 magnets could be produced and distributed widely at community meetings, events, and educational opportunities to help introduce the site.

The largest outreach effort concerns information on how individuals can take personal responsibility to make their properties and communities less susceptible to damage from wildfire. The site contains both information and action items for reducing risk before wildfire strikes at home.

Media

Various media outlets will be utilized to promote the Firewise program and the issues of prescribed fire. Attention will be drawn to the subject matter of the project in advance of the meetings. Media will be invited to cover community meetings, public response to the efforts, and to results of the campaign. Efforts will be made to train the media in fire issues and how their coverage can help the safety of the communities. The increased knowledge of the media will help them convey a better, more informed message to their audience.

Use of Education Center Staff

The Education Center at the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge impacts about 20,000 people each year through their programs. Including Firewise and Prescribed Fire messages into their program offerings is a strong possibility. The ability of the staff to take the messages and relate them to all ages and interest groups allows for a large outreach capability. It is strongly recommended by the FPET to pursue this avenue of information dispersal and communication.

Another possible use of Education Center Staff is to work with other education specialists within the NWR system and present their successes and approaches to get out the messages. Meetings they might have with other refuge staffs would be good places to exchange information and ideas in the delivery of the subject matter.

TIMELINES AND PROCEDURE

Initial Contact with District Managers

Richard Baker will contact each of the refuge managers in April 2006 to inform them of the project scope, intent of the project, and their role in the process. District Managers and personnel need to be well informed of the upcoming proposed actions. Baker will assemble response questions from the managers and respond with additional information if needed.

Communities surrounding district refuges are highlighted on maps to serve as the baseline of outreach. The target is to communicate with the public through community meetings and other forums with a captured audience. Take advantage of any events where the display can be used prior to the July roll out to increase Firewise awareness.

May 3 Meeting

A meeting will be held with OK NWR staff on May 3, 2006, at the Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge. Part of the time will be devoted to presenting the outreach program. Approximately one hour on the agenda would be sufficient. One-half hour would be needed to run through the power point presentation and one-half hour to discuss refuge tasks and discussion of the outreach project. A complete display table should be set up with the display board, stand-alone presentation, and brochures. The display should be manned. Jennifer Tucker, SCA, has excellent skills in this area and would be beneficial to the overall presentation. By May 3 it is doubtful the publications will be back from GPO printing. Copies of the approved publications can be made and distributed, but will need to be marked as DRAFT.

Since all refuge managers will be present at the May 3 meeting, several important items can be covered to achieve understanding of the project, encourage buy-in, and solicit action to achieve the community outreach as envisioned.

- Explain the overall goals and objectives of the project.
- Describe the products developed and their intended usage.
- Encourage further study into the Firewise program.
- Recommend ways the staff can begin assessing their surrounding communities for the need to understand and implement Firewise principles.

- Begin the process of discussing Firewise with the community leaders, VFDs, businesses, and landowner groups to generate interest in the topic.
- Provide information and potential resources the community can use to research Firewise and develop their own lists of how the program can be applied to their needs.
- Identify individuals that have expressed an interest in the Firewise program and would likely help lead the charge to carry the message forward.
- Identify potential presenters of the information to get the subject matter back through their specific network, organization, or interest group.
- Identify possible hosts for community meeting events and document the logistical needs of the facility.

The goal of the May 3 meeting is to involve the refuges' staff in the process, get them informed of the purpose and scope of the project, so they can carry out the plan of action that will facilitate the July roll out of the program. The staff will need approximate timelines for the roll out and desired future outcomes from the effort.

July Roll Out

In July (target) meetings will be held to involve communities surrounding each refuge. The purpose of these meetings is to extend the level of Firewise understanding in the community, explore ideas to expand Firewise knowledge, and identify others with an interest to take the program to the next level. Key individuals and groups will be invited to attend the meeting. The meeting is open to the public. A baseline of interest should exist prior to the meeting generated from the pre-work done by refuge staffs and media efforts made by the FPET.

Once community meetings have taken place there will, most likely, be three levels of interest. Some communities will be willing to distribute information, place rack cards in public areas, and inform their neighbors about the principles of Firewise. At this level, success will be from raising a general awareness of wildfire issues, and with individuals taking personal action to create defensible space around their own property.

A second level of energy would be from community resources that want to present the information to their own interest groups. Examples might be landowner developments, home owner associations, fire departments, or agencies. To facilitate good results at this level, training will need to be provided to train-the-trainers. Care must be given to ensure the people giving the information are well informed, properly trained, and given enough assistance to carry out an effective presentation that delivers the correct messages. Sufficient materials will also need to be made available for distribution.

The third level of participation would be a community that pursues Firewise grants to implement projects and works toward being recognized as a Firewise Community, USA. A council is formed to address issues of the community and organize activities that discuss and act on mitigation efforts that provide benefits for the citizens. The OK Division of Forestry has employees that conduct Firewise workshops and train volunteers to conduct community assessments.

The district refuges will need to stay in touch with communities at whatever level of interest they attain. As a neighbor and partner in the process, the refuge can act as an advisor to wildland fire issues and mitigation of dangerous fuels.

PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Meetings are to have the completed display table, with the stand-alone power point presentation and publications/brochures. The newly developed products of the FPETs from both the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge and the Oklahoma Wildfire Prevention Coalition will be available for display and distribution.

Individuals will not likely, on average, spend more than 30 seconds looking at the display. The intent of the display is to draw attention to the topics and hopefully generate an interest through a photo, a slide topic or a publication. At the end of the program it is expected that interested individuals will stop by the display and spend time talking to the attendant or to pick up more information. The person manning the display should try to entice people into conversations during both opportunities.

The main power point presentation will be given in a controlled setting and should last approximately 30 minutes. Following the slide show, an active discussion should be held to further define any topic material, encourage participation in the program and to emphasize what they can do next. A goal is to send the participants from the meeting with information and action items they can use to make their homes and community safer. Below is a list of materials that should be kept together in each of the two display sets.

- 2 laptop computers
- 1 21' monitor screen
- 1 backup CD or external jump drive containing Firewise P3
- 1 projection screen
- 1 portable LCD projector with all cables and remote control
- 1 Laser pointer
- Adequate supply of Firewise pamphlets (#depending of attendance potential)
- Sufficient copies of the 6 FPET publications
- 2 extension cords
- Connecting cables for equipment
- 2 speakers for P3
- 1 easel
- 1 set of markers for easel
- Posters for decoration and display (Firewise and Smokey)
- Roll of tape for emergencies
- 3-paneled display (pictures, text, with instructions) in carrying case
- Clean drip torch for a prop
- Clean McCloud tool for a prop (or a fire rake)
- Hard hat for prop
- 1 30''x 96'' table for display
- Chairs, if necessary
- Assorted Smokey Bear give away items if available

In summary, a coordinated effort is going to be needed to achieve a successful community outreach program. Refuge managers are going to be essential in making local contacts and finding individuals who have specific interests in the Firewise program.

Presenters of the community meetings will be comprised of local refuge employees. The FPET, if deployed, will provide the oversight, coordination, logistics and media coordination for the presentation group. There will be two distinct sets of items for presentation operations. Each set will contain the table top display, presentation programs, and all of the equipment necessary for implementation of a community meeting.

Implementation of the community meetings will, likely, occur in July of 2006. Attendance and displays of events prior to that time will further enhance the local knowledge and draw attendance to the important fire topics. Successful implementation of the community outreach will lead to a safer living environment for the citizens of Oklahoma and Northern Texas.

4. Commendations and Recommendations

The Team assignment has spanned a five week period. The following comments are offered as observations:

- The 48-hour on-site preplanning by the PETL was important in that it not only revealed the location of the target audience (15 Refuges in OK/north TX) but also allowed for some actions to be taken on office setup and supply ordering. Strategy sessions with Refuge staff on product diversity was also accomplished allowing the PETL to narrow down the required resources to complete the assignment.
- Office accommodations were excellent! The Team was provided the Refuge HQ Conference Room as an office. A LAN hub was installed and laptop PCs were made available to the Team from the start of the assignment. Shared printers, including high quality color laser printers, were also highly valued assets to Team operations.
- The Team Liaison (Refuge FMO) was very accessible to the Team, even when fire danger was elevated for extended periods of time. A Team Liaison is a tremendous asset to FPETs, particularly when multiple parties within the Hosting Unit require product peer review. The Liaison's role in facilitating this product review has been excellent.
- The Refuge IT/Web Master has provided excellent assistance and support to the Team! Quite candidly, she represents the extreme on the positive side of the customer service fence and defies the normal negative stigma people have about IT.
- The Refuge Fire Program Technician has also provided excellent assistance and support to the Team! Her processing support of CTRs and 288s, purchase of office supplies, and assists with Team member's AD paperwork allowed the PETL to focus on key projects and Team issues.
- The part-time participation of two Student Conservation Association (SCA) interns on the Team as PETM trainees was outstanding! Their participation has allowed the Liaison to maximize the SCA interns learning experience on the Refuge while simultaneously minimizing the PETL's need to bring in another full-time PETM. This truly has been a win-win situation for all involved in the FPET mission.
- WMWR leadership was excellent and provided the Team the continual support needed to accomplish its goals. Although several other pressing issues were occurring on the refuge, the staff took the time to review and comment on new products being finalized. This allocation of their valuable time allowed the Team to continue its work without interruption and delays waiting for approval to move forward. The leadership, Ralph Bryant, is to be commended for making this happen.
- The Team received excellent support in the document review process from Art Needleman in the Region 2 office. Reviewing, formatting, and preparing documents for the printing process is a tedious and time consuming task. Art's quick review turnaround and on-the-phone editing helped enormously in the completion of the publications.
- The transition on March 25 of a new Team leader went smoothly. Excellent documentation was left behind to assist in the exchange. Of highest value, however, was the staff of the WMWR and the in-place Team. They were able to provide the new leader with status on projects, tasks at hand, and continued administrative support. The use of full-time refuge personnel and the SCA interns was invaluable.

They are to be commended for their patience and support. It is the hope of the Team that valuable experience was gained and an interest was generated toward further prevention team participation.

- The US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge system and the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge are to be commended for committing to an outreach program to help their neighbors understand their role in living with wildfire. Successful implementation of the Firewise mind set takes time. The refuge emphasis to this project will benefit all who participate.

Recommendations:

The following are recommendations from the Team:

- Consider the use of a future Prevention Education Team for the roll out in July if funding is available. The current strategy to implement the outreach uses a Team to surround the local presentation staff with oversight, support and media assistance. If the refuge finds that additional resources are needed to handle the presentation assignment as well, FPET members can be added to the structure to make that happen.
- The education and outreach capabilities of the WMWR are enormous. Visitor usage of the refuge exceeds one million customers per year. The Education Center is an outstanding facility. The Team strongly recommends that a Firewise module be added to the Education Center programs. The excellent staff can convey the message to all age groups and make the learning a fun experience.
- The Team also recommends that one of the displays be set up at the Visitor Center when not committed to other usage. The display conveys a number of excellent messages. Providing brochures on Firewise and prescribed fire will help disseminate the information to a broad range of customers.
- Utilize the WMWR facilities to demonstrate Firewise principles. There are numerous structures on the 15 refuges that can be made Firewise. Active implementation by refuge employees would help develop a stronger understanding of how facilities can be made safer and what is involved in getting the job done. Signs can be displayed pointing out the demonstration sites. A further step would be for the refuge to attain Firewise Community USA status. Nationally recognized signage, active demonstrations, educational outreach, and a sincere commitment to being a Firewise neighbor would all be ways of communicating a positive message. **Firewise starts at home.**
- Advertise the new web site to a wide variety of networks. There are many interest groups and organizations that will want to be aware of the information contained. Customer groups, educational facilities, wildlife organizations, and the surrounding communities are among the networks that should be made aware of the site.
- Encourage other NWR staffs to examine the potential uses of FPETs in their area.
- A final recommendation might help facilitate any further publication production. Work with the regional office to obtain the basic format and design standards for FWL documents. Design knowledge at the beginning of the process may have helped the regional office, as well as the Team, eliminate a few steps and save valuable time for all involved.